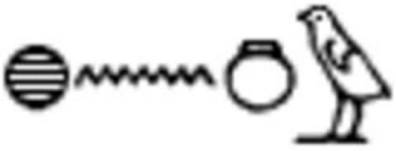
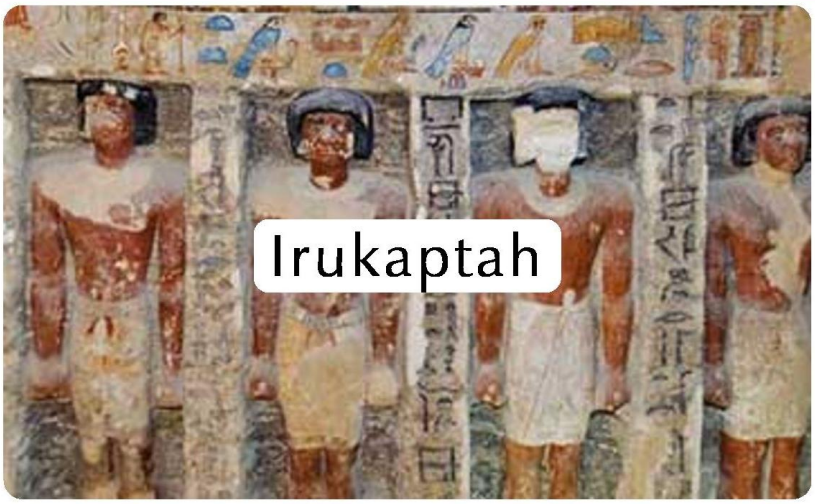
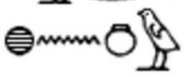
The tomb of Irukaptah 

at Saqqara, also called

Khenu 

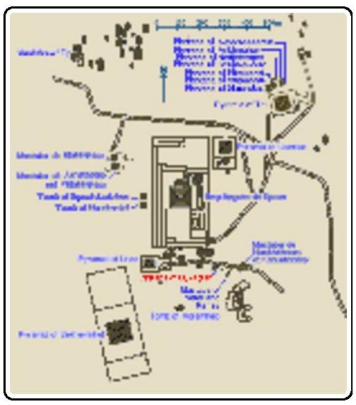




The tomb of Irukaptah  at Saqqara, also called Khenu 

Many thanks to Christian Mariais for his photos

This is part of a group of eleven burials which are located immediately to the south of the causeway leading to the pyramid of Unas, discovered and searched in 1940 by Abd el-salam Mohammed Hussein. Its owner was an official of intermediate official rank - as was his neighbours. His main title was appropriately that of an employee of the butcher's shop, in the service of the king. It is the scenes of the butcher's shop which were worthy of the famous nickname given to the tomb, that of "tomb of the butchers".



Although listed under "mastabas", this is actually a tomb; mastabas were provided with a major structure above the ground surface. The area of Saqqara contains a great many mastabas.

The chapel of the tomb is small, but remarkable, on the one hand because it is dug entirely into the cliff, on the other hand because it includes a set of fourteen statues in variable degrees of finish, of which some - exceptional for the Old Kingdom - preserved their polychromic colour.

DATING OF THE TOMB AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

A large range of dates, extending from the 5th Dynasty to the First Intermediate Period, has been proposed for this tomb, but in her work dedicated to the monument, Ann McFarlane proposes the end of the 5th Dynasty, the reign of Menkauhor or Djedkare, before the reign of Unas and the edification of his causeway. It would thus be contemporary with the mastaba of Ty and slightly later than the mastaba of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (which maybe served as a model for Irukaptah).

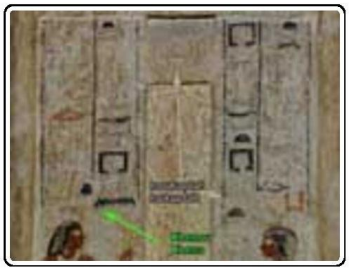
The 5th Dynasty lasted about 150 years (about 2500 to 2350 B.C.). This had the following nine sovereigns: Userkaf, Sahure, Neferirkare-Kakai, Shepseskare, Neferefre, Nyuserre Ini, Menkauhor, Djedkare Isesi and Unas. This was a period of deep changes, with notably the highest position opening to men not belonging to the royal family and the progressive transformation of the country in a bureaucratic state. Towards the middle of the period, this would tend to decentralise itself, with nomarches (provincial governors) who would reside in their nomes and not close to the royal Residence.

The kings of the beginning of the 5th Dynasty were buried at Abusir, the indirect consequence of

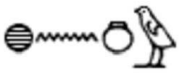
the construction in this area, by Userkaf, of his solar temple. From Sahure to Nyuserre, they built their complex of pyramids, which lead to the construction close by of several cemeteries intended for the members of the royal family, for courtiers and high commissioners. A vivid example is provided by the discovery on the site, in 2012, of the royal princess's tomb, Sheretnebty (see HERE) associated with those of high commissioners. However, many dignitaries of the 5th Dynasty were buried, by choice or obligation, in Giza or Saqqara.
The burial of Menkauhor, successor of Nyuserre, has not yet been discovered, but is not in Abusir. Djedkare then Unas abandoned Abusir and returned to being buried in Saqqara.

On the religious theme, the prominent idea of the time was the emergence of the cult of Osiris - at the latest from the reign of Nyuserre about 2430 B.C. - whose importance was going to increase. It changed, in a drastic way, not only the fate of the king, but also that of his subjects, who had to pass in front of the courthouse of the Great God. It was Osiris who was now the guarantor of survival after post-mortem and not the sovereign. According to Mathieu *"the sudden appearance of Osiris and the extraordinary distribution of his worship in the whole of the Egyptian territory supposes the existence of a decision emanating from a central and very powerful strength"*. At the same time, the control of Ma'at (the ruler of justice permitting the balance of the world), up to here in the king's hands, passed to Osiris.
At the same time as the emergence of Osiris is the exceptional development of the worship of Re, which is shown by the new structures which are the solar temples, the two gods being perceived as complementary: Re - diurnal - solar / Osiris - nocturnal - lunar. This idea would be resumed, much later, by the Ramesside theologians.

TOMB OWNER AND HIS FAMILY



Irukaptah  is the name when written correctly, as on the false door in the image to the left, but it is also found written as , which omits the *"a"* by using only , giving his name as *"Irukptah"*.

He was also called Khenu  on the false door.

He carried the following titles:
- *"Royal wab-priest"*
- *"Royal acquaintance"*
- *"Imakhu" (honoured or revered one)*
- *"the honoured one before Ptah, south of his wall"*
- *"the honoured one before the great god"*

His essential functions are appropriate to the creation of libations and activity in the butcher's shop, whose understanding is not obvious, and which are given by the title *"the libationer and butcher of the king's meal"*, and also *"the libationer and butcher of the palace"*. These titles are unusual. They appear at the same time as the major administrative titles already mentioned, which open the bureaucracy to new sectors of the society; they must also be linked to the number of important tombs of the cemetery of Unas belonging to royal butchers.
As with all the characters having their burial at the south of the causeway of Unas, Irukaptah was not a senior official of the state, but belonged to a group of men who held functions appropriate to the sovereign's personal service.

The two women who accompany Irukaptah in his chapel are presumably his wives, but their names are not mentioned.

Two children are represented, both bearing the name of Ptahshepses , but one is designated merely as *"his son"* and the other as *"his eldest son"*. It is probable that it is about two

sons having the same name, rather than only one character.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOMB COMPLEX

LOCATION OF THE TOMB AND GENERAL ASPECT



The causeway of Unas measures about 750m in length. It joins this king's pyramid to his mortuary temple, situated in the valley, very close to the Nile (see Unas-cemetery plan). Nowadays the river flows more to the east and this mortuary temple is surrounded (and covered in part) with sand. Within about 200m of the pyramid, about twenty tombs or mastabas - most being anonymous - had been constructed in the previous decades along the course of the causeway, nearly all according to a model which is found in the 5th and 6th Dynasty, with a chapel forming a corridor oriented north-south, whose entry is at the north. All were more or less destroyed, or covered at the time of the construction of the causeway. They are now located to the south of the causeway and can be divided into a west group and two groups to the east. They are situated on two different levels. In the upper group, is the tomb of Neferherenptah (so-called "tomb of the birds") which will be added to Osirisnet shortly (see tb-549).

One of the smallest tombs and maybe the oldest one (it dates from the beginning of the reign of Niuserre), is the mastaba of Nefer and Kahai, the largest is the one of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (so-called "tomb of the two brothers").



The tomb of Irukaptah is located in the west group, 9.5m under the level of the Unas causeway and 10.5m from its south side (see pl-mf-38b and the group). It can be reached by the modern staircase which runs alongside the causeway (see tb-610). The tomb was dug at the base of a small cliff in stratified limestone which overhangs it by 17m and the tomb also includes a courtyard. It is one of the largest of the group (13.45m from north to south) and it differs from all others by its exceptional interior statues, carved directly into the rock. On the other hand, the themes of the decoration are limited and banal for the era on the site of Saqqara (similar ones can be found, for example, in the famous mastaba of Ty).

Five funerary shafts open up in the floor of the chapel, destined for Irukaptah and members of his family.

THE COURTYARD



view taken from the entry of Neferherenptah

- The entry wall, which is at the north, was constructed entirely from well-dressed limestone blocks. It is unknown what its exact width was originally, or its height. In the area on either side of the entrance, the width of the wall is 0.80m in the west (right side) and of at least 1.15m on the left side.
- The opening in the facade measures 0.55m in width, 1.40m in height, with a depth of 0.85m and also includes a small recess of 20cm deep.
- The actual courtyard is nearly oblong, measuring 3.90m in length, with a width of 1.75m on the north side and 1.60m on the south side. It seems that it was never decorated.

The east and west walls of the courtyard are broken in the northern part and presently have a height of 1.20m. but the southern parts, cut entirely in the rock, are fully preserved to the original height of 2.35m. On the other side of the east wall, the tombs were deliberately buried again by

the Service of Antiquities.
The west wall, which is common with the courtyard of the tomb of a person named Akhethetep, itself joined with that of Niankhre (see cm-09-01 and cm-09-02).

ENTRY INTO THE CHAPEL



The south wall, where the entry into the chapel is located, is carved entirely in the face of the cliff. The entry opens up in its middle. The width is 0.70m, the depth 0.75m, with a height which narrows from 2m on the outside to 1.96m at the interior. Above the entry, all the facade is blocked by a lintel of 0.35m in height. In the passageway of the entrance, a structural scroll, probably with the owner's name, had been placed at the ceiling, but it has now disappeared.
The chamber is currently entered by descending two steps, but this was not the original system. It can be clearly seen in view cm-16-01, that the opening widens (to 1.05m) at the level of the first step.



THE CHAPEL



(See overhead plan pl-mf-38c) One enters into the long chamber (the chapel) of which the ground, which was originally covered with sand (see unidia-1018), has been paved with cement slabs by the Service of Antiquities (see cm-18). The ceiling is flat with a general height of 2.35m which at the north (the entry end) rises to 2.42m at the north-east corner. It bears the traces of the marks of chisels with which it had been carved, because it didn't receive a filler or coating (see cm-17).
The axis of the chapel is at an angle of 5° with that of the courtyard. The east wall has a length of 13.55m, the west wall is 20cm less. The entry (north) wall has a width of 2.25m and the wall at the rear (the south wall) measures 2.15m.
Despite the overall quality of the rock, some cracks existed from the beginning, others have widened over time. Some had been filled using a rather coarse pinkish plaster (see cm-21).
The south wall, as well as the end parts of the east and west walls, are very rough and unfinished. The south was, however, smeared then covered with a fine layer of plaster but was never decorated.
The decoration was achieved in raised relief on the north wall and to a length of 10m on the east wall, up to the opening of a small annexe (a serdab, which will be returned to later). Elsewhere, the decoration is just painted, without sculpture work. The text is reduced to the strict minimum, with the names and titles of the deceased, and a formula of invocatory offerings type (*"hetep di nesu").* Contrary to other tombs, here there are found no legends or commentaries in the representations; there is not even a "placard" including a list of offerings.

The great originality of the chapel lies in its 14 statues built directly into the walls, some incomplete, which occupy as many niches. These are located: 2 on the north wall, 8 on the east wall, and 6 on the west wall. If all those which had been started had been finished, it would be 19 statues that would have decorated this tomb, a considerable number for a private individual of the rank of Irukaptah. Other notable features include: the exceptional degree of conservation of the colours, which exists nowhere else, because statues built directly into an always more or less stratified limestone, survive badly over time. The more better preserved than these are in the mastaba of Idu, in Giza (see cm-063).

NORTH WALL

The wall measures only 2.25m in width, with the entry, on the west side, being nearly half the

width. Because of the off-centred entry, only the east part of this wall is decorated (which is on the right when facing it). The decorated area measures 1.13m wide and although the wall is approximately 2.4m in height, the full height is not decorated, there is an undecorated 0.25m dado area at the bottom. The upper area has been divided in two registers with furniture and the preparation of two beds. The lower area is occupied by two statues. Between these two areas is an irregular height text band, the left side of which is lost, but the right-hand side includes the tomb owner's title and name *"The one who makes libation, the butcher of the meal of the palace, Irukaptah".*



THE UPPER AREA (see cm-52)

This includes two superimposed registers, the one at the top being 32cm in height and the one below being 22 to 24cm. Both show some men making beds and furnishings. The colours, outlines and detail are poorly preserved, and it is possible that the left part of the registers had not even been decorated.

The two beds and furnishings


Move pointer onto the image

The two registers present the same aspect: each bed is covered with a white mattress; the head, which is on the right, being higher than the feet. Each bed has a canopy whose flat roof is sustained by five posts (apparently on both sides). The bottom of the posts have the shape of a bull's paw. The wood is painted black and striped with yellow.

· On the top register, two men are close to the bed. Like all of the others characters, they wear a plain loincloth and a short wig. The man standing at the side of the bed, holds a headrest in his left hand and a fly-swatter in the other. The second man, standing at the foot of the bed, also holds his fly-swatter in his right hand, whilst in the other he clutches a stick. Behind him, badly preserved, is a low table.

· On the register below, there are five men who are represented, reduced in stature because of the small height of the register. Two men stand at the side of the bed (see hp-46). The first, leans forward, levelling the mattress; the one who stands behind him holds a fly-swatter and a headrest (however, there is already one represented on the bed). On the left, can be seen two men who carry what appears to be an armchair with a high backrest (see ch-45). Behind them advances another man who holds in one hand a pitcher at the end of a rope, and of the other he holds a bag placed over his shoulder.

Even though the creating of a bed is represented regularly in the joinery scenes, this is not the case with the arrangement of a bed and a mattress. At the end of the 5th Dynasty, the ends of the posts will be seen in the shape of lion's paws replacing those of paws of the bull and the characters will kneel on the mattress to level it better.

THE BAND OF TEXT

Between these two upper registers and the statues below, as already mentioned, is a band of text, which extends the one situated at the same height on the east wall. As also already stated: *"The one who makes libation, the butcher of the meal of the palace, Irukaptah"*. The hieroglyphs are incised but only those establishing the title have been painted.

THE LOWER AREA

This area contains two statues which are placed in niches. They form counterparts of the eight on the east wall, with which they share several features.

The niches

On the north wall (as on the east wall) the niches are 0.25m above the ground level and occupy the bottom two-thirds of the wall. They each measure 0.44m in width, with a height of 1.35m. They are separated by a pillar of 0.14m in width. Neither of these two statues are as well preserved as those on the adjoining east wall. They have been dressed with plaster, then painted in light blue-grey, but this colour is extensively lost. The pillars between the niches on the east wall, which was painted in clear grey, only includes the name of Irukaptah and his titles, in the form of a vertical text whose hieroglyphs are incised and painted. On the area between those of this north wall, there seems to be a lack of decoration, but at the top is a trace of black paint which suggests that the text may have only been painted.

The statues



Although only two of the ten statues appear on this north wall, it is worth making the following comments here, so that they can easily be compared with the other eight.

Nine statues out of the ten in this group represent Irukaptah, the one which is furthest south on the east wall may not be of him. It was not completely finished in raised relief or even painted (see cm-s7-s8), although the statue was outlined in black paint. The text pillar before it (to the left) was not even drafted. All the other statues were carved directly in high relief into the rock of the wall, were then smoothed, plastered in a cream colour and finally painted. All show the deceased clothed in a rigid loincloth, standing upright, the two feet joined, the two arms hang at the side of the body, each fist tightened on a folded piece of cloth. He is covered with a short wig, that doesn't reach the shoulders, and wears a large necklace around the neck. The face is squared, the eyes round, the nose is straight and thick, with sometimes a moustache. The shoulders are large, sometimes nipples appear on the chest, the arms and the legs are tubular with a muscle structure and a skeleton discreetly indicated.





The loincloths are of two types. The first is entirely white, with a frontal fold and a the ties are outlines in red. The second is half white and half yellow, with a belt formed of rectangles of a green very clearly separated by a white and blue motif in zigzag and a blue buckle; a yellow tab goes back up on the abdomen while two red buckles, whose extremity is fringed, falls down each side of four decorative pearl rows (see tb-598).

On the whole, the statues are well preserved, notably at the level of the colours, but none are completely intact.

EAST WALL

This wall, which measures 13.55m in length, can be divided into three sections: the north part, from the entry wall until the end of the row of statues, a middle section consisting of scenes in the marshes and a south part extending for the rest of the wall until the south wall.

NORTH SECTION (see cm-12)

This area of the wall consists a series of statue niches, a continuation of the two on the north wall. The statue niches, average 1.35m in height, are approx. 25cm above the floor level (an undecorated dado area) slightly less at the south end. A top register, with an average height of 55cm, is separated from the niches by a band of inscription in colourful text approx. 18cm in height. The lower, niche area, will be dealt with first.

To the left of the first statue niche (see cm-56)

A column of 30 to 33cm in width, originally on a grey background, is divided in four registers



whose heights vary from 26 to 30cm. The bottom of this area is about 50cm above the floor level.

• Register 1 (upper) : Two butchers are occupied slaughtering an ox.

The lower three registers include offering bearers advancing towards the statues.

• Register 2: This includes two men. The first holds in his right hand a rope attached to a small jar and with his other he balances a ewer and a basin on his left shoulder, all of the objects destined for the ritual libations of course. His friend who follows him also holds a small jar with his right hand and balances a tray with four loaves on his shoulder.

• Register 3: The first character holds in his left hand a censer in front of his face and raises the lid between his thumb and forefinger of his right hand, incense grains can clearly be seen; the man behind brings a length of folded cloth.

• Register 4: Two men, the first of which looks towards the man behind, carry between them a table with a single support. On this are two loaves, a trussed duck and a bunch of grapes.

The statues (see cm-65 and cm-61bis)



In total there are eight (numbered left to right). Details of the general features have already be given in the description of the north wall.

Statues 2 and 6 have well-preserved faces, as does 4 which however shows a definite unbalance of the position of the eyes (see cm-63). Statue 5 was probably the better preserved of all, but alas a modern pillager pulled most of the face off him. The 7th statue shows a fairly well-preserved face but too large in comparison to the body; what makes it different is that the above the niche are faint red lines under the horizontal text which runs above all of the niches (see cm-s7). These red lines are partially carved forming an outline of a cavetto cornice, similar to those above the statue niches of the west wall. The eighth statue, the final one, is incomplete (see cm-s7-s8) and the craftsman drew in black the contours of a preparatory body. It is likely that this eighth statue had been added at a later time. Indeed, it can be seen that the vertical inscription is absent from the pillar which separates this niche from the one of statue 7 (whereas all others have an inscription) and the fact that the activities in the marshes, represented on the right, don't occupy the space correctly because they seem short of space at their left section.

The columns of inscription

Between the niches are vertical inscriptions with the name and titles of the tomb owner. These are on six of the seven pillars separating the statue niches on the east wall, the south-most pillar has no inscription. As already stated, no inscription is found on the pillar between the two statues on the north wall, although there is a trace of black paint at the top.

Starting between niches 1 and 2 is the first text: *"The libationer at the king's meal, the honoured one before Ptah, south of his wall, the wab-priest of the king, Irukaptah".*

Next: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, the honoured one before Ptah, south of his wall, the butcher of the king's meal, Irukaptah".*

Between 3 and 4: *"The libationer and butcher of the king's meal, the honoured one before the great god, the wab-priest of the king, Irukaptah".*

Next: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, the acquaintance of the king, the honoured one before the great god, the wab-priest of the king, Irukaptah".*

Then: *"The libationer and butcher of the king's meal, the honoured one before the great god, the wab-priest of the king, the acquaintance of the king, Irukaptah".*

Finally, between niches 6 and 7: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, the honoured one before the great god, the butcher of the king's meal, the acquaintance of the king, Irukaptah".*

The long horizontal inscription (see cm-82)



Here is the longest inscription in the tomb. This single line of text begins at the right extremity of the wall (the south end), above the statues which were drawn in red and below the scenes of boats. It is interrupted by the middle area of the wall which is dedicated to the activities in the marshes, and restarts above the niches of the statues, ending over the statues on the north wall. It was created in beautiful incised hieroglyphs, whose polychrome colours well withstood millennia, as the magnificent blue cobalt colour in the image opposite shows. On the north entry wall, as has been seen, at the same level, is a short more crudely executed inscription (see cm-54).

The text, east wall, south section: *"An offering which the king gives and Anubis, foremost of the divine booth, lord of the sacred land, who is on his hill, who is in the embalming place (gives), that he may travel well on the beautiful roads upon which the honoured (ones) travel.".*

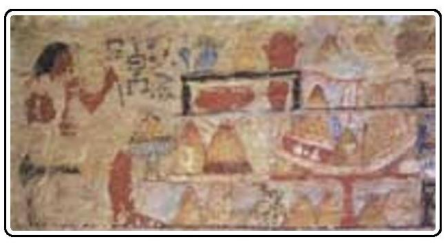
East wall, north section: *"An offering which the king gives and which Anubis, who is on his hill, who is in the embalming place, lord of the sacred land (gives) ; an offering which Osiris, Lord of Busiris, foremost of the divine booth gives, that he be buried in the necropolis in the western desert having reached a good old age, the honoured one before the great god."*

North wall: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, Irukaptah."*

The upper register

This extends approximately 5.4m along the wall. At the extreme left, close to the corner with the north wall, is found Irukaptah seated in front of the food offerings. This scene extends for about 1.5m, with a height of 0.53m (see cm-54bis). To the right of it are scenes from the butcher shop and some men bringing meat offering to Irukaptah (see cm-141).

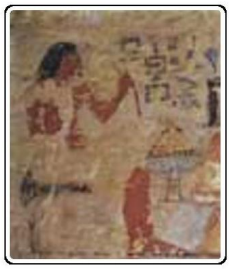
The owner and the offerings (see cm-67)



- Irukaptah

Irukaptah sits above the four small registers which have already been described and separated from them by the horizontal inscription. He is seated on a low chair of which only the rear leg, in the shape of a bull's leg, is represented. He sits on a white cushion resting on the chair, with a large papyrus umbel, being part of the seat structure, protruding at the rear. He wears the short trapezoidal beard, a moustache and a shoulder length wig. The representation underwent an alteration at the level of the loincloth: the addition (in paint only) is a stiff triangular front to the

kilt, inevitably shortening the right arm (for an idea of the real aspect one can look at the statuary group of Weri at the MFA, Boston).



In the left hand, Irukaptah holds, by the stem, a lotus flower which he holds in front of his nose in order to breathe perfume from it. As already seen in many other monuments, it is about a symbol of rebirth, but it was rare for men at this period. It is however found in two almost contemporary mastabas, the one of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (which is already present on OsirisNet) which is also under the Unas causeway, and the one of Iymery (G6020) which is at Giza (see ch-78). The scene showing Niankhkhnum breathing the lotus is located in good place, in the impressive hallway which leads into the part of the burial carved into the cliff (see tb-30 and tb-31). Irukaptah could not fail to see it and it is quite possible that it served as a model for him.

In front of Irukaptah's face, can be read the following, inscribed in black: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, Irukaptah".*

• The offerings

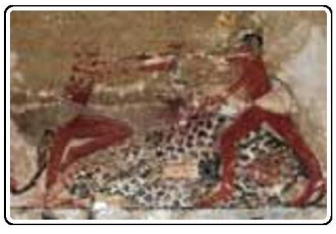


The provisions and drinks are distributed in two sub-registres in front of Irukaptah, the bottom one measures 31cm in height, the top one is slightly less, only 23cm and less in length at the right to leave space for the top of the leg of ox presented by an assistant (see top left of cm-67).

The diversity of the representations should be noted: none of the small tables or pedestals are identical with each other, neither do they carry the same objects. It should be noted, on the small black table, with yellow edges, at top left, the three ewers blue, golden and red, are associated with their basins of the same colour. Whilst, underneath is a wide red vase with a spout, and a beer vessel. In front of the owner's knees is a carinated (ridged) stone bowl carefully sealed by a lid. At the extremity of the bottom register are three identical vases placed on a low table, separated by lotus flowers. The conical breads constitute the most abundant offering of the group. The monopodale table at bottom left is made in basketwork and supports two large conical breads. The red table to its right, is wider and made of wood, holds a large basket which is artistically filled with fruits (figs, grape, pomegranates) and a loaf of white bread (see cm-319). In fact, it seems that the artist wanted to represent two baskets, one behind the other one.

Scenes of butchery (see cm-141).

This occupies a length of 3.75m and a height of 0.51m. The first four butchers (located immediately to the right of the offerings) walk towards Irukaptah. They are part of twelve participants, engaged in the slaughter of four oxen, although they are actually porters of parts of the animals; it is their job to present the cuts of meat. These four men have a normal sized loincloth/kilt. However, the others who are working on the oxen, are all clothed in a short loincloth, which are open at the front (and with the belts tied in a loop at the back) to facilitate easy movement, this exposes their genitalia. They give the impression of making a great effort, one foot or a knee on the animal, the arms stretched out to facilitate the cutting. Some stand on their toes (a unique representation according to Vandier). The animals have a white coat speckled with black or brown.



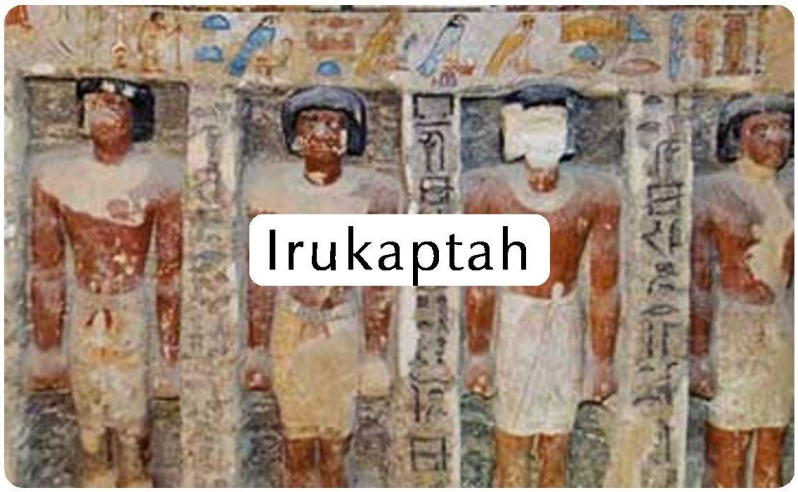
The four butchers working on the first two animals have, in the back of their belt, a stone to sharpen their knife (see opposite). The knives have a handle and a black blade (most probably of flint) and are, strangely, held with the left hand. Two characters are kneeling next to the two beasts located in the middle (see cm-157) and present, at the height of the face, a widely open vase intended to collect the victim's blood (one ignores what it was used for). Between two animals, stands a butcher who sharpens his blade (see cm_156). Unlike the others, he wears a wig which covers his ear, possibly indicating that he was the supervisor.

The ox on the left has already undergone the removal of its two front legs, an exceptionnal representation (see cm-151). The animal's rear leg is being skinned by the only butcher seen to be holding his knife in his right hand, whilst the leg is held by his assistant.



On the left, four characters have the responsibility of carrying meat towards the offerings destined for Irukaptah (see cm-148). Three of them head towards the offerings, whilst the fourth is turned towards the actual butchers. It is probably him who has passed the cuts of meat held by the porters. Meanwhile, he holds a net in his right hand, whilst with his left hand he holds a leg of meat on his shoulder.

The porter closest to the offerings presents two-handed a leg. The next one who follows him holds another one on his shoulder whilst with his other hand he holds a rod on which is skewered a duck. The third brings cuts of meat: ribs in the right hand and a thigh with the bone in the left (the central bone can be seen surrounded with muscles).



EAST WALL - CONTINUED

MIDDLE SECTION



This panel, which measures 1.70m in height and an average width of 1.35m, is dedicated to scenes which take place entirely in the marshes, a theme whose frequency increases at the end of the 5th and beginning of 6th Dynasty (maybe inspired by the room of "the seasons" in the solar temple of Niuserre). This area is divided into two registers of equal height, the lower one is further divided into three sub-registers. It appears obvious that the left-hand side has been truncated by the addition at a later date (as previously mentioned) of the final statue.
This panel has only been painted and contains no relief work. Its quality of execution is average in the lower part and certainly worse in the scene at the top. The preservation of the colours is mediocre, essentially reduced to just the red of the skin of the men, This is why it is useful to refer to plate 46 of McFarlane.

Upper register



Irukaptah, standing on the deck of his papyrus boat, is hunting the birds of the marshes with the help of a throwing stick. The whole of the representation is extremely coarse and amounts to contours in black on the base plaster. The deceased's silhouette is badly proportioned, notably his left arm and leg are much wider than the right, also the drawing of the face is certainly mis-proportionate. He is certainly taller than the other characters of the same scene, but on the other side he is the same height as the butchers. His shoulder-length wig does not cover his ear. In his right hand he holds a throwing stick, badly sketched, and with the other he holds two fledglings whose squawkings act as a decoy.
In front of him stands a woman, relatively tall, probably his wife, who also holds a fowl by the wings. The sketch of a boy, undoubtedly one of his sons, completes the scene towards the front of the boat. At the rear, a boatman seems to make a strange gesture, possibly because the artist forgot to draw the long punting pole (see cm-106), which can be seen in the similar hunting scene in the tomb of Nyankhnefertem (see CXXII) also at Saqqara.
To the left of this boat, turned in the opposite direction, is a second craft carrying a man who seems ready to throw a harpoon, but the representation is greatly damaged and incomplete. The absence of papyrus undergrowth should be noted, usually present in this type of scene.

It is almost certain that this scene had been added in a hurry after a modification of the initial decorative program.

Lower register (see pl-mf-46-detail)



This is divided into three sub-registers whose height varies from 27 to 30cm, on a blue-grey background.

Upper sub-register : cattle wading through the water

Facing towards the entry, it shows some drovers on papyrus boats supervising a herd of cattle which cross a stretch of water. This theme is essentially met between the reigns of Neuserre and Pepy I, most frequently in association with hunting scenes of birds and fishing, as it is the case here.

Five horned adult cattle, possibly accompanied by a calf in front of them, have their heads well out of the water. On each of the two boats which follow them are three men. At the front of the first craft, the man kneels resting on his heels and holds a stick in his hand with which he advances the herd. The middle boatman who is behind him (just like the middle man on the second boat) points his finger forwards, maybe at a crocodile who approaches, since the artist drew one of them under the boats, as a reminder of the permanent danger which the animal represents - perhaps to circumvent it magically. One can wonder why a boat isn't in front of the herd, to guide them (as in the mastaba of Ty) : perhaps this part of the scene has disappeared.

Middle sub-register : capture of birds in a net



The net, hexagonal as always, is represented closed, full of fowl which are difficult to recognise. The supervisor of the hunt is standing with his back to the net, behind some stems of stylised papyrus, turned toward the haulers, to which he gives the signal to close the trap, with his outstretched arms, whilst spreading between his hands is a piece of white material. The haulers are five in number and don't seem to make great efforts whilst pulling on the rope to close the net. How this net capturing function worked is not entirely clear, although an on-line article exists on "Fishing, Hunting and Fowling".

Two elements are unusual here: the first man is represented in an attitude different of that of his companions, and the supervisor's figure is also unusual: standing behind his men, wearing a pointed kilt which indicates his rank, his right hand rests on his left shoulder.

Bottom sub-register : dragnet scene

The Egyptian artist shows, as usual, the last moment of the fishing, the one where ten men are divided into two equal groups on either side of an overseer, who stands in the middle. They pull the net on to the bank. Several of the hauliers can be seen to wear just a belt (no kilt), the second from the left has a shoulder strap and the man in front of him wears a short open kilt. The river (or channel of water) where the action is located, is represented with some fish under the men, who are here represented smaller than those of the middle sub-register. Their attitudes are surprisingly static, whereas in other tombs one finds the men in very various attitudes, making great efforts. Between the two groups stands the overseer, displayed as partially bald with a pot-belly, wearing a knee-length pointed kilt and leaning on a staff (see cm-109-detail, although difficult to see). A better preserved example is in the mastaba of Mehu (see ch-10201 12) which is also near the Unas pyramid.

SOUTH SECTION (see cm-110)

The decorated portion stops to the left (north) of the opening of the serdab. The end of the wall

(right of the serdab) has only been roughly cut (see cm-19), just like the south extremity of the west wall.
The description of this section of the wall will be divided into four parts: the owner seated in front of the offerings, the scenes of navigation, the preparatory drawings for two more statues (see cm-111) and finally what is at opening of the serdab and the wall to the right of it. The text which separates the upper area (the offerings) from the scenes of navigation and the statues has already been dealt with.

Irukaptah and the offerings


Move pointer onto the image

The scene is almost a symmetrical mirror image of the one of the north side, of which it appears to be an extension. It measures 3.65m in length, with left side, containing the offerings, being again divided into two sub-registers with a total height of 0.46 to 0.49m. At the right extremity, where Irukaptah is seated, it has a total height of 0.70m. The difference is due to the band of text, which does extend this far.

Irukaptah, and only him, is seated above the entry of the serdab. This part of the scene is hardly visible, but with the overlay in the image opposite it becomes more legible. Again, as in the north version of the scene, only the rear leg of the seat is represented, but it is this time formed with a lion paw. This time there is a monopodal table placed in front of him with three items on it.

The offerings had been created with great detail and preserved with brightness in their colours. The same elements are present as those previously described in the version at the north end of the wall, also, rather than producing a list of them, it is better to admire them in the image below and in detail in the following images: cm-115, cm-117 and cm-119.

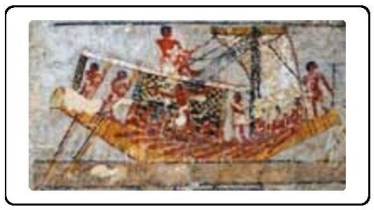


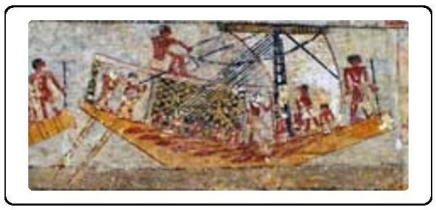
Scenes of navigation (see pl-mf-48)



Four registers, each 30-39cm in height, occupy a bluish-grey panel of 1.50m in width. Each consists of two boats. Their hulls are in the typical shape of the river boats of the Old Kingdom. The number of these scenes reveals the importance of the boats in the life of ancient Egyptians, a theme which will last during the centuries and which, in the Old Kingdom, would especially be developed during the 5th and the beginning of 6th Dynasty. This is how they are found, also in four registers, in the contemporary burials of Ptahhotep and Ty.

Registers 1 and 2
On the two registers at the top, four vessels are shown moving southwards propelled by the wind, which blows from the Mediterranean Sea. The second boat (left) of the first register is papyriform with the bow and the stern bound by lashings at each end of the hull.





Apart from this, the four boats look much alike, both in the rigging, the general structure and the crew (see tb-587). A double posted mast is located towards the front of the boats. A cabin/shelter is located at the rear with a roof strong enough to support one or more crew, in this case probably the navigational sailor who controls the two ropes secured to each end of the upper yardarm.
At the front of each boat stands the pilot, holding a long staff in his hand, charged with guiding the craft and notably to avoid the sandbars. His orders are passed to the two helmsmen at the rear and the rowers, by the character who has his arms outstretched. On one of the boats of the second register he holds a short stick with his right hand (see tb-604), but he is absent on the first boat of the first register (see tb-602). At the stern of each of the four boats, under the awning, stand two helmsmen who steer the boat with long-handled oars.
Irukaptah, although he is not named, is positioned between the cabin and the mast, facing forwards. In three instances he wears a shoulder-length wig, but in the second boat of the top register he wears a short wig exposing his ear. Also, in one occurence only, he holds a staff in his left hand. Three times out of four, a man who wears a pointed loincloth like the one worn by the tomb owner, stands in front of him, a hand on his shoulder as a sign of respect. It can been seen (although with difficulty) that the rowers (between 8 and 10) are at rest, their oars (more numerous than the men) being above the water.

Register 3

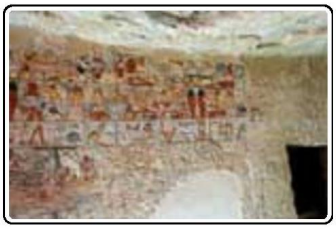


Less in height than the two preceding registers, it shows two vessels that head north, borne by the current of the river and by the efforts of the rowers who are this time turned towards the stern and seated above the deck level. The bow of the boat on the right has the shape of an animals head (a hedgehog?). This time, there are two pilots standing at the front of each boat. Irukaptah (or his statue) is found, clothed again in a loincloth with a triangular front kilt and holding a long staff in front of him, under an awning at the front of the deck-house. Again, as in the boats above, standing amongst the rowers, a man stands with his arms outstretched. Once more, at the stern under the awning, stand two helmsmen who steer the boat with long-handled oars. In the leading boat, towards the rear, a member of the crew leans over the side of the boat holding an object which to some degree looks like a bird.

Register 4 (see tb-607)
This is very badly preserved. It includes two barges of transportation whose deck is almost completely occupied by a large cabin. These vessels face south, just like the sailing boats in the two top registers. The crew is much reduced: two pilots in the first boat (right) and one in the other, there are still two helmsmen at the rear. How they proceed against the current, without sails or oarsmen, is uncertain. It is difficult to recognise what is being transported by these boats, although still distinguishable are some jars, some heaps of grains and what looks like rolls of cloth.

Preparatory drawings of statues (see cm-124)

Between the scenes of navigation and the serdab, is found, preserved incompletely, the red painted sketches of two statues which would have been the same size as those next to the entry. A third head overlaps the leftmost one. This indicates the hesitation and uncertainty of the draftsman in trying to fill the space. Several instances also reveal their efforts to centre the statues in the future niches.



The opening of the serdab and the wall to the right of it (see cm-139)

The entry was created 30cm above the level of the floor and measures 0.65m wide and 1.15m in height at the north side and 1.05m at the south; the entry depth being 30cm. It had originally been sealed by a mud brick wall, of which a great number were strewn on the ground at the time of the discovery of the tomb.
It opens up into an uninscribed chamber, in the shape of a parallelogram, having the following average dimensions: The east and west walls being 1.65m north-south (the rear wall being displaced 35cm to the south), 1.10m east-west and 1.10m in height. Inside, the entry is positioned slightly north of centre.

The serdab

Katja Lehmann supported (in 2001) her thesis under the direction of the Prof. Jan Assmann on the topic "The serdab in the private tombs of the Old Kingdom". It had the following summary:
The standard serdab is defined as a rectangular or square chamber for a statue, situated in the superstructure of a tomb, or underground, intended to contain at least a statue of the owner of the tomb. Serdabs have been recovered in close to 600 tombs of the Old Kingdom, since the first Dynasty until the First Intermediate Period [...] One of the results of the survey was to show that it circulates many false ideas in Egyptology as to the architecture, to the content and the place of the serdab in the tombs
The serdab represented a funerary chamber, functionally for the statue of the deceased's ka. [...] Nothing proves that, in the private tombs, the funeral of a statue of the ka was indispensable to the funeral cult: the owner of the tomb chose to integrate, or not, a serdab in his monument, as well as its location.
Thus, the private serdab appears as an optional chamber, which had an evolution of its own.
In the Pharaonic tombs, it was indispensable for the funeral of statues of the royal ka.
In the bibliography the links permitting the download the thesis (however, in German only).

As already seen in the description, above this opening is found a seated representation of Irukaptah.

South-most section of the wall

To the right of the serdab opening, the wall had only been roughly cut. This area includes at 2.0m to the south of the opening and 1.0m above the ground, a roughly cut horizontal narrow ledge, measuring approximately 0.85m long by 0.1m deep by 0.15m thick (see cm-19). It's function remains unknown.



SOUTH WALL (see cm-19)

This has already been described at the beginning of page 2, but following is worth repeating here. Although the southern ends of the east and west wall show no signs of never having been smoothed and remain roughly cut, although some large cracks were filled. The south wall, which still shows evidence of several cracks, was smeared then covered with a fine layer of plaster, but was never decorated. This wall is roughly square in shape, measuring about 2.30m in height and width.

WEST WALL (see cm-15)

This includes, towards the south end, a stela false door, then, after a recess, four statues in the north area and the sketches of three others. There is no painted area except the inside of the false door.

THE FALSE DOOR



This is located to the right of the roughly hewn area, which extends 1.95m from the south wall (see cm-23). This is created as a monolithic limestone structure, whose base is 18cm above the level of the floor. It measures 0.76m wide and 2.20m in height. It is edged at the sides and top with torus moulding, 6cm wide. The top is surmounted by an Egyptian cavelto cornice (65cm wide by 19cm high). It is very unusual to find a cavetto cornice and torus moulding on a false door with only a single pair of jambs.
Inside the torus moulding, at the centre of the lower section, is the narrow central niche with a decorated pair of jambs on either side supporting a lintel, above which is an upper panel and an upper lintel. The internal surfaces are covered with a thin filler of plaster and are decorated. The central inset niche has retained signs of red and black paint to imitate granite.
The door is in an unfinished state: leaves which should have decorated the cavetto cornice have not been created, although some guide lines are still visible.

The upper lintel

This carries a text painted in black, the only non-incised text on the false door: *"The acquaintance of the king, the honoured one before the great god, Khenu".*

The upper panel



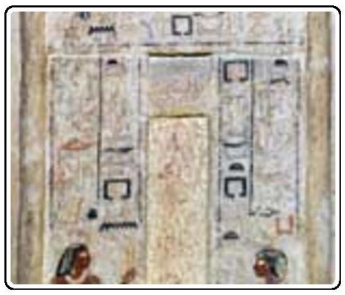
This measures 45cm wide by 40cm high. To right and left is a recessed area of 10cm width. The background of the whole area includes traces of red and black paint, showing that it had been painted in imitation of granite. At the top of the panel is a line of text: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, the acquaintance of the king, Irukaptah".*
The image is of the tomb owner seated in front of an offering table. He wears a shoulder-length wig, his left arm is folded on his chest, with the right arm stretched toward the offerings. He is seated on a low seat, with no backrest or cushion, at the back is the usual papyrus umbel. As with the other seats in the tomb, there is no front leg visible, the rear one being in the shape of a bull's leg. In front is a monopodal table, on which are twelve upright half loaves of bread, stylised as to have the inner part of each loaf facing each other, except the outer two portions have the inner part facing outwards, a rare fact, but it can be found, for example, on one offering tables of Khnumhotep (the so-called tomb of the two brothers). Under the table, to the right, is a low rectangular table, on top of which is a basin, a ewer and a jar of beer. To the left is a traditional enumeration: *"A thousand (pieces) of alabaster, a thousand (pieces) of cloth, bread, (crocks of) beer, cakes, waterfowl, cattle".*

The lower lintel (see tb-582)

This carries, in incised and painted hieroglyphs: *"The acquaintance of the king, the libationer and butcher of the king's meal, Khenu".*

The two jambs

These, which could also be called doorposts, each measures 1.10m by 0.25m, whilst the central opening, between them, measures 15cm wide. It is surmounted by a roller drum carrying the name: *"Irukaptah".* Each doorpost carries two small vertical lines of text and a horizontal one beneath, this last giving, together, the two versions of the owner's name.





Right jamb
Text: *"The libationer and butcher of the palace, the wab-priest of the king, the honoured one, Irukaptah".* Underneath, almost occupying half of the total height, is a representation of the standing image of the deceased wearing a short wig, a necklace and a pointed kilt. With his right hand, he grasps a staff whilst with his left hand he holds a folded piece of cloth. In front of his legs is a quite small representation of a naked boy who holds one-handed the staff of the deceased; he is designated as: *"His son, Ptahshepses".*

Left jamb
Text: *"The acquaintance of the king, the libationer and butcher, the honoured one before the great god, Khenu".* Beneath, is found a mirror image of the deceased, except for the wig, which this time descends down to his shoulders. Here a small naked boy also holds on to his father's staff. He is identified this time as *"His eldest son, Ptahshepses".* Because this person is taller than the one on the right jamb and the use of "eldest" with his identification, makes it likely that Irukaptah had two sons each bearing the same name.

Beneath each doorpost are two dado bands separated by black horizontal lines. The upper bands at each side are 3cm in height, with the one on the right retaining traces of red paint, the lower ones are non-painted and 4cm in height.

THE RECESS (see tb-576)

Immediately to the right of the false door, a recess of 1.90m wide by 0.55m deep had been cut

into the wall, of which it occupies the whole height. Its function is unknown, but a similar one is also found in Akhethotep, the tomb adjacent to that of Irukaptah.

THE STATUES (see cm-37, cm-38, cm-39, cm-40)



The four niches have been reasonably cut into the surface, 45cm above ground level. Each measures about 1.62m in height and 0.62m in width. They are separated by 42cm wide pillars. All had meant to be completed with decoration including an Egyptian coving as well as jambs, but work had been abandoned long before it was finished. However, the outer coving and jambs are present on the first (left) and the jamb on the left side of the second.

Each niche contains a statue in human size, representing three men and a woman, supposedly these are three of Irukaptah and one of his wife. The mediocre quality of the rock required the use of filler to repair the faults. Remains of a pale pink filler shows that the statues were intended to be painted, but it is uncertain if the colours had begun to be applied.

All characters stand with their feet together. The three men have the arms hanging at the side of their body, whilst the woman has the right arm folded on her chest, with the hand at the height of the breast.

Here, more than on the opposite wall, can be seen the stages of creation of these statues, since the preparatory work was in red paint, then passing on to chisel work to create more and more detail.

NORTH END OF THE WALL, TO THE RIGHT OF THE STATUES (see cm-42)

This area had been dressed with a layer of pink plaster, which has nearly disappeared completely. Where it remains, it shows the red lines which were to guide the craftsmen to carve three other statue niches (see cm-43). These lines also underline the other decoration which had not been achieved, as seen in the upper part of the coving of the fourth statue of those just described (see cm-45).

THE SUBTERRANEAN COMPLEX

Five square-mouthed funerary shafts open up in the ground at the bottom of the east wall. All were found empty and uninscribed, as were also the burial chambers which they lead to.

Shaft 1 (see jh-s1) This is positioned immediately south of the unfinished statue and 5cm from the east wall. Its square opening is roughly 1.3m wide, with a total depth of 3.45m. At the top it has 20cm wide and 53cm deep ledges along the north and west walls. At the bottom there is no funerary chamber.

Shaft 2 (see jh-s2) This is located 67cm. south of shaft 1 and 20cm. from the east wall. The square section shaft is 1.05m wide at the top but widens over 10cm at the bottom. It has a maximum depth of 4.70m. The bottom floor slopes sharply to the west. On the west wall is an opening 70cm high and a step down of 25cm. This opening leads to a small burial chamber, which also has a sloping floor and ceiling at the same angle as the shaft floor. The chamber measures 1.15m east-west, 2.20m north-south and 1.0m in height.

Shaft 3 (see jh-s3) This one is located 20cm from the east wall and directly in front of the serdab. Again with a square shaft, it is 1.30m wide with a depth of 4.92m. Again the width expands towards the bottom. This time the bottom of the shaft is horizontal. At the base is the access to a

chamber, 1.20m high, which opens up for the full width of the west wall. This is the main burial chamber, which was sealed by a limestone and mud brick wall after the funeral ceremony, some of which still remains in position. The chamber measures 3.05m north-south by 2.25m east-west and 1.20m in height, the north wall running in line with that of the shaft, thus the chamber extends southwards. The south and west walls were totally unfinished and the south end of the ceiling slopes downwards. No remains of the deceased were found.

Shaft 4 (see jh-s4) Measuring 1.06m north-south, 1.10m east-west and 5.40m in depth, it is 57cm south of the previous shaft. Its eastern side is 15cm under the east wall of the chapel chamber. As it descends its dimensions change, measuring at the base: 1.00m north-south, 1.12m east-west for the north wall and 1.27m for the south wall. A 94cm high opening is located in the east wall, 46cm above the bottom of the shaft, to the full width of this east wall. This gives access to an extremely small zone which doesn't deserve the name of funeral chamber, as it actually faces in an easterly direction. The chamber measures, on average, 1.55m north-south by 1.00m east-west.It has a sloping ceiling which reduces the chambers height to 61cm at its eastern side. Again the north wall runs in line with that of the shaft.

Shaft 5 (see jh-s5) Located in the south-east corner of the chamber, the mouth of the shaft undercuts the two walls by 10cm. It measures 1.10m north-south and an average of 1.04m east-west. The bottom of the shaft slopes down towards the west, with a maximum depth of 4.85m. The bottom of the west wall has an entry 80cm in height leading to a very irregular burial chamber, which is also very roughly cut. The floor follows the slope of the bottom of the shaft, although the ceiling is horizontally level, giving a maximum height of 1.00m at its west side. Its dimensions are roughly 2.20m north-south by 1.00m east-west.

Bibliography

- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig : "Arbeiten am Grab des Neferherenptah in Saqqara (1970-1975) ", Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo 38, p.1-16, Mainz 1982
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig : "Fifth dynasty" in Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, vol II, p.597-601, AUCP, 2001
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig : "Les tombeaux de la Ve dynastie", Les Dossiers d'Archéologie, N° 146-147, p.27-38,1990
- ALTENMÜLLER Hartwig : "Remarques sur la datation de la tombe d'Irou-ka-Ptah à Saqqarah", Actes XXIXe congrès des Orientalistes : Égyptologie, vol 1, p.1-5, Paris, 1975
- CHERPION Nadine : "La conception de l'homme à l'Ancien Empire, d'après les bas-reliefs figurant les notables", in L'art Égyptien au temps des pyramides (collectif), p.83-93, RMN, 1999
- CHERPION Nadine : "Mastabas et hypogées d'Ancien Empire. Le problème de la datation", Connaissance de l'Égypte ancienne, 1989
- COONEY John D : "Three Egyptian Families of the Old Kingdom", Bulletin of the Brooklyn Museum, Volume XIII, Number 3, p.1-18, Spring 1952
- DE RACHEWILTZ Boris : "The rock tomb of Irw-K3-Pth", Leiden, 1960
- JONES Dilwyn : "Boats", University of Texas Press, 1995
- KANAWATI Naguib : "The tomb and beyond", Aris & Phillips, 2001
- KANAWATI Naguib, WOOD Alexandra : "Artists in the Old Kingdom, Techniques and achievements", Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2009
- LEHMANN Katja : Der Serdab in den Privätgräbern des Alten Reiches. Thèse sous la direction de Jan Assman. URN: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-opus-28634 ; URL: http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/2863
- MASTABASE CD-Rom : Leiden Mastaba Project, Peeters Publishers, Leuven; 2008
- MATHIEU Bernard : "Mais qui est donc Osiris ? Ou la politique sous le linceul de la religion", ENIM 3, p.77-107,2010
- McFARLANE Ann : "Irukaptah, a Master Butcher at Saqqara", Bulletin of

the Australian Centre for Egyptology 10, p.77-86,1999
- McFARLANE Ann, with contributions by S.SHAFIK, E. THOMPSON and N. VICTOR : "The Unis cemetery at Saqqara. Vol I : The tomb of Irukaptah", The Australian Center for Egyptology, report 15, Aris & Phillips, 2000
- MONTET Pierre : "La chasse au filet chez les Égyptiens", BIFAO 11, p.145-153,1914
- MONTET Pierre : "Les scènes de boucherie dans les tombes de l'ancien empire", BIFAO 7, p.41-65, Le Caire, 1910
- MONTET Pierre : "Les scènes de la vie privée dans les tombeaux égyptiens de l'Ancien Empire", Istria, Strasbourg, 1925
- PORTER & MOSS, MALEK Jaromir : "Topographical Bibliograpy of Ancient Egyptian Hiéroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings", III part 2, Memphis : Saqqâra to Dahshûr, p.639, Griffith institute, Oxford, 2003
- ROTH Ann.Macy : "The Organization of Royal Cemeteries at Saqqara in the Old Kingdom", Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt, t.25, p.201-214,1988
- VANDIER Jacques : "Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne", tome V, bas-reliefs et peintures, scènes de la vie quotidienne, Paris, 1969
- VERNER Miroslav : "Abusir. Realm of Osiris", AUCP, 2002